

T.H. Lodges
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Former McKeen Block Was Home of Knights Templar

By DOROTHY J. CLARK

On Monday evening, March 26, 1888 the Terre Haute Commandery 16, Knights Templar, held what was considered to be the most elegant reception ever held in the history of Indiana secret societies. The event was of double importance.

The new quarters in the McKeen Block, 644 to 688 Wabash, later known as the Fairbanks Building, and torn down to make way for the present parking lot on the northwest corner of Seventh and Wabash, were acknowledged to be the finest in the West, with a possible exception of Chicago, and were to be formally opened.

The occasion was to be especially notable because of the presence in the city of Inspector Rt. General Eminent Sir Henry G. Thayer of Plymouth. He delivered the major address at the reception.

For many months the members of the committee on arrangements, Sir Knights George E. Far-



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rington, John W. Cruft and Edmund Gilbert had been working on all details necessary to make this reception a faultlessly elegant one.

Officers of 1888 were: Charles M. Daggett, eminent commander; Leonard S. Briggs, generalissimo; Robert P. Davis, capt. general; William S. Roney, prelate; Joseph H. Briggs, senior warden; Robert Taggart, junior warden; Asa M. Black, treasurer; Fredrick Schwingrouber, recorder; John H. Cliff, sword bearer; William C. Eichelberger, standard bearer; William E. Perryman, warden; Harry P. Crea-

ger, third guard; James L. Pringle, second guard; George Libert, first guard; John R. Hager, organist; and Uriah Shewmaker, capt. of guard.

The program, exquisitely printed and daintily tied together with satin cords, contained the menu, the toasts, and the names of the officers.

The menu for the banquet catered by Robert Taggart included raw and escalloped oysters, sweetbreads with mushrooms, breaded veal cutlets, French peas, Ham-burgh steak, Koetter Hotel style, vintage of 1886.

The next course included cold turkey, ham, tongue, chicken salad, lettuce salad, olives, pickles, and celery. Guests could choose from French rolls, Boston brown bread, wafer crackers, angel cake, chocolate cake, White Mountain cake, and assorted cakes.

Desserts included Neopolitan ice cream, lemon ices, edam cheese, pineapple cheese, bananas, oranges, and Malaga grapes. There was Java coffee and Oolong tea to be enjoyed with cigars and bon bons. Naturally there was music and flowers.

Dr. W. C. Eichelberger gave a complete history of the 20-year-old organization. The Dowling Commandery was organized in 1866, chartered in 1868, and in 1871 the name was changed from Dowling to Terre Haute Commandery.

There were so many toasts and responses and long-winded speeches that the affair lasted until two o'clock the next morning.

The new quarters of the Terre Haute Commandery occupied ten rooms in the new McKeen block (new eighty years ago, that is). These rooms were expressly designed by Architect Hannaford for the special work, use and benefit of the Knights Templar.

President McKeen told the committee to go ahead and fix the quarters to suit themselves and the result was convenient and elegant. There were two entrances, one on Wabash and one on Seventh. On the Wabash Avenue side the Knights had their monogram on the large pane of plate glass and some said jokingly that it would then

look as the Knights owned the entire building. At the top of the stairs the monogram appeared again, beautifully executed by Mr. Forrestall.

Dr. B. F. Swafford described the east stairway as the greatest improvement for the old, too fat men. The reception room was handsomely furnished and provided with a piano. The Wardrobe room contained 90 cupboards all numbered in which the members kept their elegant and showy uniforms.

Eighty years ago the people of this city had time to live graciously and enjoy themselves. With all our progress (so-called) these days, it's refreshing to look back and see how it used to be.

Community Affairs File

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